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ABSTRACT

The Illinois Task Force on Declining Enrollments, created by the State Superintendent of Education, was charged with developing recommendations to aid in solving some of the economic problems that the state and local boards face in this era of declining enrollments. This publication provides a summary of the task force's research and outlines its recommendations. It is organized in five sections: enrollments in the past, present, and future; fiscal considerations; staffing considerations; surplus space and program opportunities; and school closing. (Author/IRT)

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Report and Recommendations of Illinois Task Force on DECLINING ENROLLMENTS

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EA 007 839

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FOREWORD

After more than twenty years of rapid growth in school enrollments, the nation and state now face a decade of declining enrollments. And, in our growth oriented society, this process of reduction and resultant realignment will require time – time for understanding, acceptance and adjustment.

The facts of declining enrollments must be studied and appropriate strategies and procedures developed at the local and state level.

How each school district responds to declining enrollments necessarily must be determined by its financial resources and enrollment projections, educational programs and goals, community needs, styles of communication and decision-making, and most of all, its planning ability.

To define the problems and propose solutions, Dr. Bakalis organized and I convened a task force composed of teachers, administrators, university and Board of Higher Education staff, representatives of educational associations and Illinois Office of Education and other state agency personnel. The Task Force on Declining Enrollments was charged with the developing recommendations to aid in solving some of the economic problems that the state and local boards face in this era of declining enrollments.

This publication provides a summary of the Task Force's research and outlines its recommendations. Copies of the full Task Force on Declining Enrollments report are available upon request at the Illinois Office of Education, Department of Planning and Research, 100 North First Street, Springfield, Illinois 62777.

Joseph M. Cronin
State Superintendent of Education

ILLINOIS ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL ENROLLMENTS: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

THE ISSUE:

After World War II, Illinois public school enrollment increased for 27 consecutive years, reaching a peak of 2,373,659 during the 1971-72 school year. This record high enrollment represents a 113 percent increase over the 1945-46 enrollment of 1,115,707. However, since the 1971-72 peak year, enrollment in Illinois public schools has declined consistently, and is projected to continue to decline for at least the next ten years. Both the long, steep increase in enrollment and the recent decline parallel similar trends at the national level.

FOUR QUESTIONS:

As a result of this statewide decline in enrollment, four questions must be asked:

What factors have produced the decline?

How long will the decline continue?

How great is the decline likely to be?

How can individual school districts develop reasonable projections of their own future enrollment trends?

FACTORS AFFECTING ILLINOIS SCHOOL ENROLLMENTS:

Four factors exert a significant effect upon Illinois public school enrollment: the number of live births, migration patterns, nonpublic school enrollment, and dropout rates. While the discussion in this report will focus on the statewide picture, most counties and districts show similar trends, and school district personnel may use statewide information as a frame of reference to compare with their own enrollment situations. Only five of the 102 counties will continue to grow in enrollment through 1985.

LIVE BIRTHS:

The "baby boom" following World War II and continuing throughout the 1950's was responsible for the accelerated school enrollments of the 1950's and 1960's. Likewise, the basic reason for the recent decline in overall enrollment is the general decline in the annual number of Illinois live births during the 1960's and early 1970's. Table I shows the changes in the annual number of Illinois resident live births. The crucial year displayed in this table is 1959, when the number of live births reached a peak of 239,871, the culmination of consistent annual increases since World War II.
(Illustration)

TABLE I: Annual Number of Illinois Resident Live Births

Year	Number of Live Births	Index of Live Births (1959=100)
1947	196,007	81.7
1950	189,640	79.1
1953	206,813	86.2
1956	229,571	95.7
1959	239,871	100.0
1962	230,484	96.1
1965	208,063	86.6
1968	193,261	80.6
1971	195,311	81.4
1974	168,991	70.5

Table II presents three sets of projections of the annual number of Illinois live births for the years 1975 through 1980. The annual projected female population is multiplied by projected fertility rates to obtain projected numbers of live births. The fertility rate is the number of live births per 1,000 females aged 15 through 44.

It is noteworthy that all three models project an annual increase in the number of Illinois resident live births beginning in 1975, when the number of childbearing age females is projected to begin an annual increase of 50,000. If any of these three models of projections of live births proves to be reasonably accurate, Illinois public school kindergarten and first grade enrollments should begin a steady gradual increase beginning in the 1980-81 and 1981-82 school years, respectively.

TABLE II: Three Projections of the Annual Number of Illinois Resident Live Births

Years	Number of Females 15-44 Years of Age	Decreasing Model I: Rate*	Births	Constant Model II: Rate	Births	Increasing Model III: Rate	Births
1974	2,458,000	68.8	168,991	68.8	168,991	68.8	168,991
1975	2,505,000	68.5	171,600	68.5	171,600	68.5	171,600
1976	2,555,000	68.1	174,000	68.5	175,000	68.9	176,000
1978	2,655,000	67.3	178,700	68.5	181,900	69.7	185,000
1980	2,755,000	66.5	183,200	68.5	188,700	70.5	194,200

*The rate of 68.8 live births per 1,000 females ages 15 through 44 years observed in 1974 is assumed to drop to 68.5 in 1975 and then drop 0.4 per year through 1980 in the decreasing Model I. The value of 68.5 chosen for 1975 is assumed to remain unchanged in the constant Model II and to increase 0.4 per year in the increasing Model III through 1980.

All information presented in Tables I and II was provided by the Illinois Department of Public Health.

MIGRATION:

From 1960 to 1970, there was a net out-of-state migration of 28,117 persons, or less than 0.3 percent of the total Illinois population. On an average annual basis, this net out-of-state migration is insignificantly small, and for practical purposes the decade of the 1960's can be viewed as a period of zero net migration for the State of Illinois as a whole.

Although corresponding migration information is not yet available for the decade of the 1970's, the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the Illinois Department of Public Health estimate that the State of Illinois experienced a net out-of state migration of 289,000 during the four years from April 1, 1970 to June 30, 1974. While this degree of net out-of-state migration is relatively small, it nevertheless appears to have contributed to the 1972-73, 1973-74, and 1974-75 public school enrollment decline.

PUBLIC/NONPUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT RATIOS:

Although pupil transfer to nonpublic schools may help explain public school enrollment decreases in some school districts, the overall percentage as well as the number of Illinois school age children in nonpublic schools has consistently declined during the past ten years.

From 1965-66 to 1974-75, the proportion of students enrolled in public elementary schools increased from 75.7 percent to 84.2 percent, while the portion attending nonpublic schools decreased from 24.3 percent to 15.8 percent. The same trends exist at the high school level, where the proportion of public school students increased from 78.7 percent in 1965-66 to 86 percent in 1974-75.

STUDENT DROPOUT RATE:

During the most recent four-year period for which dropout information is available (1970-71 through 1973-74) there has been a gradual consistent increase in the dropout rate among Illinois public high school students. Dropout rates have increased from 5.8 percent in 1970-71 to 6.6 percent in 1973-74. This increase in the dropout rate has had a small but noticeable effect upon Illinois public high school enrollments during the 1970's.

However, the necessary information is not available to develop meaningful predictions of future dropout rates. While the recent upward trend could continue among high school students, is it also possible that the current high rate of unemployment may encourage some

potential dropouts to remain in school. Expanded vocational programs and the creation of alternative programs also could reverse this small upward trend in the high school dropout rate. (Editor's note: 1974-75 data received at press time shows the dropout rate has receded to the 1970-71 level.)

OTHER FACTORS:

While there are other factors which could potentially affect school enrollment, such factors have not contributed to the current decline in Illinois public school enrollment. They include the death rate among children, the potential for change in public and nonpublic school enrollment through enactment of constitutional state and federal laws, or the enactment of institutional changes providing state financial aid to nonpublic schools.

PROJECTIONS OF ILLINOIS ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL ENROLLMENTS:

Table III shows projections of elementary and high school enrollment in Illinois public schools for the period 1975-76 through 1985-86. The projections are based upon the relationship between Illinois public school enrollment in given years and the number of Illinois live births in preceding years. The full Task Force report discusses in detail the methods used in developing the projections.

Since enrollment projections are predictions, they should be treated as useful guidelines for planning, not statements of actual future enrollments. Only if the 1971-75 trends in net out-of-state migration, dropout rates, and the public/nonpublic enrollment ratio continue relatively unchanged and only if the constant fertility rate model projection of 68.5 actually occurs, will these projections prove to be relatively accurate.

Statewide projections of Illinois nonpublic school enrollment are subject to considerably greater error than projections of public school enrollment for two main reasons. First, the additional variables of parental attitudes and private school costs affect nonpublic school enrollment. Second, reporting and collection of nonpublic school enrollment information is not as complete as for public schools. Because of these limitations, statewide nonpublic school enrollment projections were not undertaken.
(Illustration)

TABLE III: Illinois Fall Public School Enrollment Projections

School Year	Kinder-garten	Grades 1-8 & Spec. Ed.	Total Elementary & Spec. Ed.	Total Secondary & Spec. Ed.	Total Enrollment
1970-71	181,111	1,503,021	1,684,132	668,654	2,352,786
1972-73	166,790	1,476,696	1,643,486	704,035	2,347,521
1974-75	164,285	1,398,434	1,562,719	719,170	2,281,889
			PROJECTIONS		
1975-76	171,345	1,363,376	1,534,721	722,247	2,256,968
1977-78	147,614	1,316,500	1,464,114	707,571	2,171,685
1979-80	140,263	1,245,033	1,385,296	673,002	2,058,298
1981-82	145,250	1,196,803	1,342,053	628,665	1,970,718
1983-84	150,977	1,166,361	1,317,338	597,232	1,914,570
1985-86	156,621	1,137,842	1,294,463	599,957	1,894,420

ENROLLMENTS AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL:

Declining statewide public school enrollments in Illinois do not necessarily reflect what is happening at given regional or local levels. Differences in enrollment trends from locality to locality relate to patterns of commercial, industrial, transportation and accompanying residential change and development; migration; age, racial and socio-economic composition of the populations; and values, attitudes and life-style preferences of individuals and families in a locality.

For example, generally enrollments are decreasing in central cities, older suburbs and small town/rural areas, but at varying rates. However, it should be pointed out that within the same region, one district may be experiencing increasing enrollments and the neighboring districts, decreasing enrollments. Within a school district, enrollments may be increasing rapidly at some attendance centers while decreasing sharply at others. However, for most communities, overcrowded classrooms are a part of the past, and declining enrollments are the emerging concern.

Community analysis and long-range projecting and planning will help school boards and administrators avoid problems related to closing schools, releasing teachers, balancing budgets and explaining why per pupil costs continue to increase. People within communities should be made aware of the likely enrollment trends and be involved in seeking solutions before problems become severe.

PROJECTING SCHOOL ENROLLMENTS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL:

Local planners can utilize several approaches in projecting enrollment trends. Some are more sophisticated and reliable than others, and each has its limitations when used alone. Some of the techniques are:

- Historical survey, a study of past enrollment data to place projections in perspective.
- Survival and retention ratios, the percentage of resident live births to first grade enrollment and the number of students in one grade progressing to the next grade in a subsequent year.
- Statistical-regression model, mathematical equations defining the relationship between live births and school enrollments.
- Community indicator survey, a study of social, financial, and residential factors of the community and their impact on changes in school enrollments.

The full Task Force report includes instructions and charts that will be helpful to local district personnel in using the above methods to project local enrollments.

Private and public sources may be tapped by local boards of education and administrators for data indicating changes in population. The decennial federal census, while not conducive to detailed planning, can provide baseline data for estimating current statistics. Many community sources, including community colleges and universities, state, regional and municipal officials, property brokers, local service and religious groups and major employers may have information on population changes and other factors that will effect enrollments.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Task Force on Declining Enrollments recommends that the Illinois Office of Education should continue to provide services which will assist local school districts in their efforts to plan for declining enrollments. Some specific recommendations are that the office should continue to monitor enrollment trends on an annual basis and should encourage regional superintendents and local districts to take an active role in projecting enrollment and planning for declining enrollment.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Sample

OFFICIAL BALLOT

PROPOSITION TO INCREASE THE TAX RATE FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES

(Place a cross (x) in the space to the right of the word indicating the way you desire to vote.)

Shall the maximum tax rate for educational purposes of Springfield School District No. 186, Sangamon County, Illinois be established at .85 percent per annum on the full fair cash value of the taxable property in the District, instead of .50 percent per annum, the maximum rate otherwise applicable to the next taxes to be extended?	YES
	NO

PROPOSITION TO INCREASE THE TAX RATE FOR OPERATIONS, BUILDING AND MAINTENANCE PURPOSES

(Place a cross (x) in the space to the right of the word indicating the way you desire to vote.)

Shall the maximum tax rate for operations, building and maintenance purposes of Springfield School District No. 186, Sangamon County, Illinois, be established at .50 percent per annum on the full, fair cash value of the taxable property of the District, instead of .375 percent per annum, the maximum rate otherwise applicable to the next taxes to be extended?	YES
	NO

A LOOK AT THE FISCAL SIDE

THE ISSUE:

As state aide is based primarily on pupil numbers, declining enrollments mean a loss in state aid. But this loss generally can not be accompanied by a corresponding decrease in facility and staff expenditures at least not in the short run. An inflationary economy and the limited possibility of tapping additional revenue from local sources further complicate the problem. To cushion the fiscal impact of declining enrollments, there should be some modifications in the state aid formula.

THE ECONOMIC DILEMMAS:

Two basic economic dilemmas are posed by the trend of declining student enrollment. The first is that costs will continue to rise even as student numbers decline.

The U. S. Office of Education projects a national enrollment decrease over the next decade of nearly 12 percent; but estimates that from 1972-73 to 1982-83, operating expenditures for elementary and secondary education will increase by 25.7 percent and expenditures per pupil will increase by 40.9 percent.

In Illinois, operating expenditures per pupil rose from $738 in fiscal year 1968 to $1,360 by fiscal 1974. Expenditures in "real" dollars rose during that same period from $709 to $924. A considerable part of the increased cost, then, is due to inflation, with the remainder resulting from more and better services and programs.

Current vs. Real Per Pupil Costs[a]

	Current	Real (1967=100)[b]
FY '68	$ 737.77	$709.39
FY '69	804.51	733.37
FY '70	931.46	800.91
FY '71	1052.08	865.91
FY '72	1121.64	897.31
FY '73	1228.20	927.64
FY '74	1359.56	924.24

a Per pupil costs defined as operating expense per ADA.

b The consumer price index for June of each year was used to deflate the current dollar operating expenditures per ADA.

Related to this is the second financial dilemma: most operating expenditures will respond only to a fairly substantial decline in enrollment, which school revenue immediately drops when the district loses a student.

Generally, only staff reduction and/or closing of facilities will bring about significant savings; and a substantial enrollment decline is necessary before these measures can be taken. At the high school level, the

problem is further complicated because staff reductions may mean eliminating or restricting programs, especially in smaller schools.

However, the state aid formulas and many federal funds are based primarily upon the number of students served, so that a school district begins losing revenue soon after it begins to lose enrollment.

The impact of declining enrollment upon local support for education is a matter of speculation; but is is generally hypothesized that a declining number of students will have a negative effect upon the district's ability to pass tax and bond referenda. Two reasons are that a lower percentage of the electorate will have children in school, and that a common attitude holds that a district with fewer students does not need more money.

Because of the direct influence of shrinking enrollment on state aid, school districts with lower assessed valuations and therefore proportionately higher state aid will suffer sharper financial losses due to enrollment declines than wealthier districts which depend more heavily on local tax dollars.

Following an adjustment period, the Task Force believes school district expenditures will reach a level at which per pupil cost, measured in constant dollars, is higher than per pupil costs at their original, pre-enrollment decline level; but lower than the cost during the adjustment period. If this new level is not reached, in the opinion of the Task Force, the enrollment shrinkage has caused the district to drop below the size where an efficient operational level can be reached through internal reorganization. In such a case, higher costs per pupil are projected unless efficiency is attained through special programs or school district consolidation.

Forty-two states in addition to Illinois are feeling the impact of enrollment shrinkage, and a number have adopted various methods to cushion the loss of revenue to school districts. Kansas, for example, has provided that no district will receive less than 90 percent of its prior year's entitlement.

Several states, including Illinois, have instituted plans to diminish immediate financial losses for school districts experiencing rapid declines in student population. In California, a district experiencing a decline in excess of one percent of the previous year's enrollment may claim up to 50 percent of the lost pupils for reimbursement purposes. Illinois allows school districts to select the higher of the best six months ADA of the two previous years. These kinds of adjustments are effective as short to intermediate term measures.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS:

Solutions to the economic problems created by declining enrollment must be based upon a combination of legislative effort and tight financial planning and allocations at the district level. The Task Force makes the following recommendations:

1. The Illinois Office of Education should provide technical assistance in school management, focusing upon cost saving techniques and upon planning and budgeting for declining enrollment.

2. The Illinois Office of Education should undertake an in-depth investigation of variable and fixed costs in elementary and secondary education. Two products of this investigation should be a model to project revenue and expenditures by major category and a study of economies of scale determining optimal school district size for minimizing cost, both in the short and in the long run.

3. For a specified period of time, general state aid should be made less immediately responsive to changes in student numbers. The State Board of Education should seek passage of legislation which would slow the rate of claimable pupil loss for general state aid purposes. Two alternatives that should be considered are:

   For a specified period following the beginning of the enrollment decline, allow a district to count one-half of the best six months ADA of claimable pupils lost from one year to the next. The approach would allow the district a period of time to adjust to a new level of efficient operation.

   For a specified period of time, allow school districts to use the highest of the best six-month ADA figure for any of the last three years.

4. The Illinois Office of Education should conduct a study of the impact of enrollment decline upon local voter support and bond a tax referenda.

STAFFING—A PROBLEM OF NUMBERS

THE ISSUE:

The decline in school enrollments, coupled with reduced and shrinking economic resources, has accentuated the necessity for districts to develop long-range staffing plans which reflect not only a reduced student population and increasing fiscal constraints, but insure the continued maintenance of quality instructional programs.

SUPPLY AND DEMAND:

Although enrollments have declined in the past several years, the number of downstate public school teachers has increased from 78,300 in 1970-71 to 80,700 in 1974-75. This slight increase in total teaching positions can be primarily attributed to lower pupil/teacher ratios and program additions. As to the future, it is projected that the total number of downstate public teaching positions will remain about the same for the next three years.

During the early 1970's, the turnover rate of teaching positions has sharply decreased from 13.8 percent in 1970-71 to 10.1 percent in 1974-75. The number of vacancies available during that four-year period dropped from 12,850 to 8,870. And, as the turnover rate is expected to continue to decrease for the next few years, the number of openings will continue to decline. The number of vacant downstate teaching positions is projected to range from 5,300 to 6,750 by 1977-78.

For the school year 1974-75, less than 8,900 downstate public school teaching vacancies existed. Since historically approximately 40 percent of available vacancies are filled by teachers reentering the profession, less than 5,400 openings remained to be filled by recent college graduates.

Competing for these positions in 1974-75 were 14,054 Illinois university and college graduates who, along with many others who had received their training elsewhere, were qualified to teach in the state. The supply of qualified teachers entering the job market in the past few years has clearly outstripped the number of available positions – a condition which has produced a recent decline in the number of teacher education graduates. In 1971-72, 17,768 Illinois university and college students completed bachelor degree preparation for the standard teaching certificates in contrast to approximately 12,800 in 1974-75. If supply and demand are to be brought into better balance, it is apparent that this trend should continue.

STAFFING PLANS:

Every school district, regardless of its enrollment picture, should systematically develop and regularly update long-range staffing plans.

For districts experiencing declining enrollments and increasing fiscal constraints, reduction in force (RIF) may be necessary. To achieve an orderly reduction of staff and to minimize personal anxieties, advance planning is required.

Each district should regularly collect data which would:

1. Indicate patterns of attrition of both professional and nonprofessional staff.
2. Determine enrollment projections by grade level and by subject matter at higher levels.
3. Determine professional and nonprofessional staffing requirements based on projected class size policies, program demand and requirements, district educational goals and fiscal resources.
4. Determine seniority and tenure status.
5. Record age, sex, and race data for retirement and affirmative action analysis.
6. Estimate the number of available former teachers, by subject matter, living in and near the district, who might reenter teaching.
7. Provide a basis for qualitative assessment of the teaching staff.

Based on data collected, school districts can better project future staffing needs. In addition, districts should establish the criteria and procedures for determining and administering reductions. In addition to district seniority, criteria on retentions might include teaching ability based on performance ratings, degrees and additional credits, certification status, and years and types of teaching experiences.

In view of possible reductions in force, districts should provide training about "due process" and employee rights for board members and district personnel. Other staffing issues for districts to consider include hiring teachers qualified to teach in several fields or levels and reviewing policies for payment of teacher retraining, and for voluntary transfer of teachers to grade levels or subject matter where shortages exist.

Also, transfer policies and procedures for staff affected by facility closure should be developed, and policies on leaves and nontenured teacher contract periods should be reviewed to determine if revisions are required to better serve district goals, finances and enrollment projections.

Finally, the district should develop a comprehensive communications plan which informs and involves staff and community in planning and implementing reductions in force.

SOME ALTERNATIVES:

Declining enrollments do not necessarily mean that districts must

eliminate jobs. Many school systems have taken advantage of reduced enrollments by utilizing vacated space and surplus staff to introduce new programs or expand present ones.

Also, within available financial resources, districts should consider filling program support positions, such as teacher aides, coordinators and advisors with teachers who otherwise would have been terminated due to declining enrollments. These teachers could then regain their teaching positions as attrition created funded vacancies.

However, if reductions in force are necessary, early retirement incentive plans may provide an effective and humane means of achieving some staff reductions and also may be financially advantageous for the district. Programs which permit teachers early retirement without financial penalities are being increasingly adopted by many U. S. communities.

Generally, the retirement incentive plans are designed to provide a mechanism for school districts to reduce operating expenses by encouraging teachers who have reached the top of salary scales to take early or partial retirement. An added benefit of this approach is that it minimizes the number of involuntary terminations needed to achieve appropriate staffing levels.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Current teacher supply and demand information should be provided to students entering or considering to enter state college and university teacher preparation programs.
2. In order to promote quality programs and a teacher supply/demand balance, the Illinois Board of Education and the Illinois Board of Higher Education should conduct studies to determine the feasibility and desireability of:

    A. Requiring each Illinois public teacher training institution to submit a five-year plan which projects a reduction of students enrolled in certain programs, or provides reasons for noncompliance.
    B. A five-year course of study as a requirement for certification in Illinois.

3. Each Illinois teacher training college should review its own standards of admissions and retentions with a view to greater quality control.

4. Legislation providing for retirement at age 55 **without discounts** with 20 or more years of credited service should be passed.
5. The State Board of Education should sponsor a statewide or several regional study committees to discuss teacher retraining.
6. The State Board of Education should sponsor a conference of school groups and the state's major public and private employers to assess alternative employment opportunities and review the feasibility of establishing a clearinghouse at the state level to help teachers find jobs.
7. The Office of Education should conduct a study to determine occupational patterns of teachers who have left the profession.
8. The Office of Education should provide booklets, consultants and training to assist local districts in projecting their staffing needs.
9. The Office of Education should examine a representative sample of districts experiencing declining enrollments and disseminate information on the implementation of school board personnel policies and negotiated contract provisions on personnel.
10. There should be a state sponsored administrative staffing study to provide criteria to determine appropriate school district administrative staffing levels.
11. Due process training for superintendents, board members and teachers should be conducted by the associates representing each group.
12. In view of the uncertainty of funding and staffing levels until midsummer, the State Board should sponsor a committee representative of the major school interest groups in the state to appraise the desirability of maintaining or changing the 60-day dismissal and resignation notification rules in **The School Code of Illinois**.

SURPLUS SPACE / PROGRAM OPPORTUNITIES

THE ISSUE:

While not all communities will experience declining enrollments, projections based on the current birthrate and the rate estimated through 1985 clearly indicate that most will. And, as student populations decrease, one of the major decisions school districts must make is to determine the best possible utilization of surplus space.

A NEW EMPHASIS:

During most of the past quarter-century, school districts have strained available resources in attempts to provide suitable space to meet the demands of an ever-expanded student population. A seemingly endless series of building construction bond referenda, double shifts, portables and other temporary classrooms, bussing and program reductions or eliminations were but a few of the solutions some districts employed to cope with the problems of too many students and too little space.

Today, however, the population problems most school districts are experiencing result from declining enrollments, requiring many districts to develop retrenchment strategies, not expansion techniques. And, this process of retrenchment brings with it problems vastly different from those of growth and expansion.

Not all of the issues of declining enrollments are those of reduction or contraction, however. A reduced student population usually produces surplus space which presents opportunities to improve existing programs or develop new ones.

Best uses of surplus space and staff must be determined based on the district's educational goals and community needs. And, of course, plans for program improvements or additions necessarily must be responsive to increasing economic constraints.

As noted in the fiscal chapter, as student population declines, so does state and federal funding. Also, local citizen support may be difficult to cultivate. However, despite the possibility of fewer operational funds and potentially less community support, school districts will be expected to meet state mandated and locally determined educational objectives – thus, an enigma of declining enrollments.

A TIME FOR REVIEW:

While each district's goals and resources differ somewhat, the criteria for making program decisions are essentially the same. Program decisions are based on laws, accrediting agency requirements, student demand, staff and space availability, fiscal resources, district policies and educational goals, local economic and employment needs, community expectations and others.

As space becomes available, districts have a wide spectrum of programs from which to select the approach which best serves its particular needs. Declining enrollments do provide a particularly good setting for

major curriculum review and an opportunity to explore open classroom and team teaching techniques which may enhance the district's instructional programs.

The Task Force on declining enrollments recommends that regular school, special needs, alternative and vocational/career education programs be examined to determine how to best utilize surplus space. Also, districts should identify and explore the possibility of using school facilities for programs of other community based public or social agencies.

PROGRAM OPPORTUNITIES:

Regular School

Task Force suggestions for improving regular school programs include:

- Discontinuation of double shifts, extended day scheduling and other undesirable practices which had been implemented due to overcrowding.
- Elimination of temporary classrooms and unsatisfactory schools.
- Reinstatement of programs such as art or music which previously had been reduced or eliminated due to overcrowded conditions.
- Creation of learning resources and audio-visual centers, learning laboratories and school museums.
- Implementation of programs such as modular and block scheduling, which emphasize optimum time periods for learning rather than maximum space usage.
- Creation of student lounges or centers.
- Expansion or creation of office space and meeting rooms for faculty, support staff and volunteer aides.
- Reduction of class size to provide opportunities to individualize instruction.

Special Needs

Suggested uses of surplus space for special needs programs include:

- Corrective or adaptive physical education programs which include physical therapy.
- Diagnostic evaluation programs for special need students, including pre-school children.
- Sheltered workshops for mentally and/or physically handicapped.
- Early childhood education centers.
- Seminar programs for academically talented students.
- Accelerated academic programs.
- Bilingual education programs, including orientation of immigrants.

Vocational Education

Surplus space in schools can provide greater impetus to vocational and career oriented educational programs. Pre-entry survey type vocational programs as well as programs that intensify job entire information and training can be initiated. Some examples are:

- Career education resource center for students and teachers desiring information about vocational or professional job clusters.
- Job acquisition clinics for students seeking assistance in obtaining skills to acquire jobs.
- Training centers for small appliance repairs, cosmotology, horticulture, plumbing and others.
- Job placement centers for students seeking employment.

Community Based Programs:

One means of strengthening a school's cooperative relationship with governmental and social agencies is to share unused space. One of the most successful school/community linkages has been developed with senior citizen groups. More and more senior citizen groups are

participating in school hot lunch programs and are welcoming the opportunity to use vacant classrooms for special functions and classes.

Other community based programs might include:

Community Services

- Local historical centers.
- Space for training sessions for local governmental agencies.
- Employment agency counseling centers.
- Cultural centers for art, music and drama.
- Governmental offices which provide such services as food stamps, licensing, military recruitment and others.
- Community organization centers for service clubs, church groups, chamber of commerce, fraternal organizations, etc.
- Imigrant centers for orienting non-English speaking persons.
- Child care centers.

Adult and Continuing Education Services

- Day-time adult education classes.
- Off-campus university and junior college extension classes.
- Parent effectiveness classes.
- English as a foreign language class.

Health Services

- Health care centers for minority groups.
- First aid training and care centers.
- Drug abuse centers
- Field experience centers for medical students specializing in emotional and physical disorders.

– Mental health day care or outpatient centers.

Alternative Education

And, finally, consideration should be given to using newly acquired space for alternative education programs for people of all ages. Every school district has its dropouts and potential dropouts, and its unmotivated and unchallenged students. Alternative environments and programs could provide some of the answers to these probiems.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Task Force on declining enrollments recommends that:

1. The Illinois Office of Education provide training programs and information on the management of school programs in a period of enrollment decline to assist school administrators and teachers.

2. The Illinois Office of Education develop funding sources to be allocated to mid- and long-range program planning in such fields as health education, education of the exceptional child and environmental education.

3. All educational requirements placed before the legislature be evaluated in light of declining public school enrollments.

SCHOOL CLOSING

THE ISSUE:

School closure is a process of identification and analysis of economic resources, enrollment projections, staffing plans, program adaptations and facility usage; but more than factual analysis and well-based justifications, closing a school is a process of community involvement.

CRITICAL GROUPS, CRITICAL CONCERNS:

School closure is an emotionally laden issue which confronts parents, students and school board members with the possible loss of well-established interpersonal relationships and reputations; it threatens school personnel with probable transfers or terminations and represents to community groups the potential loss of a neighborhood school which might mean lower property values.

Closing a school means changing boundaries; changing geography may mean bussing and changing school populations, resulting in different economic, social, ethnic and racial mixes.

Simply, then, closing a school can mean a great deal of conflict unless the planning and implementation process is the shared product of those it affects.

An important part of gaining community support is the creation of citizen advisory councils, committees or task forces. These committees, which should be representative of major groups in the district, can assist in collecting and analyzing data, disseminating information to the community and making recommendations for school closures. Also, districts may find that outside consultants are useful in building public confidence that all major issues relating to school closures have been carefully analyzed and considered.

CRITERIA:

When sufficient surplus space in a district has been identified to warrant closing a school building or buildings, the buildings to be closed must be selected and a timetable established.

Districts should examine each facility to determine if the facility meets the requirements of a good instructional program, can be adapted for noneducational uses and if the building can be easily and inexpensively modernized. Other criteria to be studied and evaluated are each facility's fixed operational costs, enrollment capacity, socio-economic characteristics, safety features and area traffic patterns.

THE PROCESS:

Public hearings can be an effective means of bridging the communications gap between the school district's problems and community support. Prior to conducting a public hearing on the issue of closing a school, the relationship between enrollment decline and fiscal support should be well publicized.

The Task Force on Declining Enrollments recommends the following format for conducting public hearings on school closure:

First, the consultant and/or study group should report research results and include specific recommendations. Second, the superintendent of schools should present a specific written recommendation on the school closure. Third, the board president should open up the hearing for citizen participation. Fourth, the board, superintendent, and staff should respond to appropriate citizen concerns in an unemotional, objective and dignified manner. Fifth, the board president should then open up the discussion of the recommendation to the board of education. Sixth, in this or a subsequent meeting, as determined by the board, a board member will make a specific motion to:

- dissolve the attendance area of the school to be closed by a fixed date
- have the given school be permanently closed as an educational facility by a fixed date
- approve recommendation to reassign students from closed schools to new attendance areas
- authorize the superintendent of schools to take preliminary steps to sell school property

Seventh, the board of education should vote on the superintendent's recommendation.

Note: To avoid the appearance of hasty decision-making, it is generally unwise to vote on a school closure issue the same night as the public hearing.

PROPERTY DISPOSITION

Once the decision has been reached to close or partially close a school, determination must be made as to the most appropriate disposition of the facility and property.

Leasing

Leasing is the best alternative if a probability exists that school facilities will be needed in the projectable future for public educational purposes. Leasing part of a building to create joint occupancy of students with another segment of the community may not only be fiscally advantageous to the district, but educationally sound.

In 1975, Illinois law was changed to expand the discretion of local districts in leasing school property. The maximum term of a lease to local government agencies was extended from 10 to 25 years, and for the first time, districts may lease facilities to other "suitable lessees," but such leases are limited to a maximum of 5 years. Thus, districts may now rent their facilities for use as community centers in art, music and drama, and for many other programs.

Selling

The school district, its administrator and board members must be prepared to take an active role in selling or leasing school property. Zoning regulations must be checked, legal requirements must be met and district personnel must aggressively seek out a buyer.

School district officials should review the provisions of **The School Code of Illinois** which set forth guidelines and procedures for sale of school sites, buildings and other real estate. Generally it is a good practice to employ a lawyer during the selling process to insure that the district is in compliance with legal requirements which govern the sale of school facilities.

Local zoning laws must be reviewed prior to the sale or lease of a school. School district officials should meet with the local zoning board to explore zoning regulation changes which would allow a vacant school building to be used for noneducational purposes.

Next, districts must initiate the process of finding a buyer. And, finding a buyer for school property can be difficult—public sales frequently do not produce bidders and the sale of a school may be a low priority property for local real estate firms.

Local and regional news media and trade journal publicity, bankers, the chamber of commerce, the school district's citizens' committee, county and local government agencies, as well as local and regional real estate firms, can be helpful in selling school property. Also, districts should contact the Illinois Department of General Services, Division of Real Estate and Leasing, which is responsible for locating space for all state agencies. As state agencies are major space users throughout Illinois, districts may find that a state agency is a good prospect for purchase or lease of vacant schools.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Task Force on Declining Enrollments recommends that the Illinois Office of Education

1. Establish a Resource Center on Declining Enrollments which would maintain a computerized statewide inventory of vacant classrooms and school buildings to provide potential users of school space a centralized source of school vacancy information. The center should also assist districts with legal concerns relating to closings and the sale of buildings.

2 Develop the capacity to provide technical assistance to districts on community relations procedures and techniques to employ during a school closure.

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